

# Fact Sheet

## AB 1153 (Beall)

### Emergency Air Medical Transportation Act

#### PROBLEM

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Air ambulance services provide life saving emergency transportation for the most critical patients from accident scenes directly to trauma centers. Emergency helicopter air ambulance providers maintain a critical link between rural areas and urban tertiary care hospitals (trauma centers, heart/stroke centers, burn units, etc.). They are an essential part of the Statewide EMS system and play a key role in disaster response and homeland security.

Emergency air ambulance services providers provide coverage to multiple counties within a 100-mile radius of their bases. As a result, transports originate in a county other than where they are based, which makes it virtually impossible for them to be funded by local tax support except in the largest of counties.

These critical service providers transport all emergency patients without knowing if the patient has any form of medical insurance or ability to pay for the service. A significant number of emergency patients transported by air ambulances have no insurance, are not eligible for Medi-Cal, and have no ability to pay for the service, yet these patients are given the same high level of care as those with medical insurance.

The hospitals where air ambulance services providers deliver patients, air ambulance services providers are not eligible to apply for additional federal funding for providing services to high numbers of indigent patients pursuant to California's disproportionate share hospital (DSH) program under the Medi-Cal program.

The Medi-Cal program pays air ambulance services far below the cost of providing emergency

air transportation, and pays nothing if the patient is indigent and not eligible for Medi-Cal. Current Medi-Cal base rates for helicopter services are only 40% of the average Medicare rates in California, which are similarly inadequate to cover costs. In rural areas this can fall below 35% of the cost of the transport.

#### THIS BILL

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AB 1153 will provides for increased Medi-Cal funding of emergency air ambulance transportation by imposing a flat \$3 fee on each motor vehicle violation in California, with the exception of parking tickets.

Revenue generated by the additional penalty will be augmented with federal matching funds by the State Department of Health Care Services, who will then use the funds to increase Medi-Cal payment rates and/or provide supplemental payments to air ambulance providers.

#### SUMMARY

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Air ambulance services provide essential transportation to critical patients when ground transportation is not fast enough. **They are critical to the survival of patients.**

Air ambulance services providers transport all emergency patients without knowing if the patient has any form of medical insurance or ability to pay for the service.

Additionally, unlike hospitals and emergency physicians, air ambulance service providers do not receive payment from the county Maddy Emergency Medical Services Fund when they provide treatment to an indigent patient.

**This bill would provide critical funding to this essential life saving service.**

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**STATUS/VOTES**

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**Assembly Public Safety Committee  
Tuesday, April 28th**

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**SUPPORT**

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CAL-AAMS  
Doctors Medical Center (Tenet) – Modesto  
Valley Heart Associates - Modesto  
Westport Fire District – Modesto  
Board for Critical Care Transport Paramedic Certification  
Placer Hills Fire Protection District - Placer County  
Diamond Springs Fire Protection District – El Dorado County  
Patterson Ambulance Service – Patterson (Stanislaus County)  
Memorial Medical Center (Sutter) – Modesto  
REMSA/ Careflight – Northeast CA  
CALSTAR  
Barton Healthcare System (Tahoe)  
Regional Medical Center of San Jose  
Hall Ambulance  
John Muir Hospital Walnut Creek (Contra Costa & Solano County)  
International Association of Flight Paramedics (IAFP)  
PHI Air Medical  
Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association (ASTNA)  
CA State Firefighters Association  
Stanford University Hospital & Clinics  
San Bernadino County Fire Department  
SkyLife of Central California  
Rogers Helicopters Inc  
Community Medical Center – Clovis  
Enloe Medical Center – Chico  
Plumas District Hospital

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**OPPOSITION**

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None on file as of April 21st

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